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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 000753

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EEB/ESC/TFS, NEA/ARP, S/CT  
DEFENSE FOR OSD, CENTCOM

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TAGS: [KTFN](#) [KU](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: S/CT AMBASSADOR BENJAMIN APPLAUDS RECENT KUWAITI  
PROGRESS ON CT, URGES CONTINUED, INTENSIFIED EFFORTS

REF: A. A. KUWAIT 721

[B. B. KUWAIT 707](#)

[C. C. 08 KUWAIT 782](#)

[D. D. 08 KUWAIT 704](#)

[E. E. KUWAIT 502](#)

Classified By: DCM Thomas E. Williams for reasons 1.4 (b), (d), (e).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. S/CT Ambassador-at-large Daniel Benjamin was warmly received by Kuwaiti officials July 26. Key points:

- (C) S/CT Benjamin applauded the GOK's intensified efforts on CT over the past six to nine months, as well as continued GOK focus on ensuring force protection for the large U.S. military presence here; fighting extremism is a shared responsibility and USG wants to work with the GOK and our other regional friends to develop solid policies and programs that emphasize de-radicalization;

- (C) Due to the fluid nature of terrorism, S/CT Benjamin urged the GOK to even greater vigilance; he emphasized that groups that today do not target Kuwait can easily shift in future - this consequently requires partners in the fight to intensify their cooperation and to seek innovative approaches (in this context he asked the GOK to ensure funds not flow to the Taliban);

- (C) On charities, he recognized the GOK's recent efforts to ensure greater oversight and accountability and said more effort in this area would be beneficial; restriction of cash donations and greater overseas oversight by Kuwaiti diplomatic missions is helpful, but could usefully be augmented by more intensive work with the headquarters operations of charities based in Kuwait;

- (C) The USG would welcome GOK steps to adopt more comprehensive CT and CT financing legislation, and on the latter stands ready to assist the GOK in coming into full compliance with MENA/FATF AML/CT financing guidelines; USG also seeks GOK clarification regarding finalizing an MOU on Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection (CEIP), including affirmation by Kuwait of what cost-sharing formula it proposes;

- (C) Ambassador Benjamin reminded the officials of the upcoming Jordanian Regional Biometrics Partnership conference as another counterterrorism opportunity for Kuwait, and urged full participation. (REF A).

- (C) GOK officials averred that the CT fight is Kuwait's fight, and outlined the recent actions they have taken and procedures they have implemented to address the threat. While acknowledging that new legislation would be helpful, they emphasized that they are amending/interpreting existing laws to the fullest extent possible (e.g., Interior Minister

can withhold issuance of passports, Attorney-General can approve more robust surveillance without reference to the court) and are now getting more positive results. On CT financing, GOK officials urged that more intel and legally admissible evidence be provided, particularly on the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS).

12. (C) Ambassador Benjamin, accompanied by S/CT staffer Ingalls, met with the following Kuwaiti officials during his July 26 visit: Shaykh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Director, National Security Bureau (NSB); Abdulrahman Al-Bashir, Deputy Director and Major General, Kuwait State Security (KSS); Alanoud Al-Sabah, Assistant Director, International Relations Office; Mohammad Mohen Al-Afasi, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL and Ahmad Al-Sane, Inspector of Charity Organizations (MOSAL), accompanied by Ambassador Jones; as well as Ambassador Khaled Al-Muqamis, Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

#### Recent Progress Noteworthy...

13. (C) Ambassador Benjamin noted positively recent GOK CT efforts, including increased arrests and convictions of Al-Qaeda facilitators over the past 6-9 months as well as more robust oversight of cash contributions to charities, and expressed appreciation for the ongoing protection of US forces in Kuwait. The US welcomes increased cooperation and information-sharing by the Kuwait Security Service and stands ready to provide assistance, including technical assistance, that can help the GOK address the shared threat. Ambassador Benjamin noted that more intensive bilateral and regional

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cooperation would be necessary to successfully address the evolving terrorist challenge.

#### ...But We,d Like to See More

14. (C) Ambassador Benjamin emphasized the importance the USG attaches to the GOK passing and implementing comprehensive CT and CT financing legislation to ensure that those who finance and otherwise facilitate terrorist activity can be brought to justice more easily and effectively. More information-sharing and pro-active cooperation and coordination against terrorist groups would similarly be welcome. The United States wants to promote legitimate charitable activity, but seeks increased oversight and accountability mechanisms for charities in Kuwait, particularly over the operations at the headquarters of charities based in the country. The Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) is one example where more focus on the headquarters operations of the charity is clearly in order.

#### The U.S. Stands Ready to Support

15. (C) S/CT Benjamin said the U.S. would support an effort to pursue stronger CT legislation in any way appropriate. He similarly offered USG assistance to help the GOK fulfill their MENA/FAFTF AML/CT obligations and said the USG would endeavor to increase its intelligence sharing on terrorist financing, including on the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society. The Critical Energy Infrastructure program is another area where the U.S. stands ready to assist Kuwait address potential vulnerabilities, but we require clarification from the GOK with regard to the pending MOU to ensure that cost-sharing arrangements are appropriate. Given the importance of cooperation among partners, Ambassador Benjamin urged the GOK to attend and participate actively in the upcoming biometric conference in Amman, Jordan (some GOK interlocutors indicated they were not aware of having received an invitation; S/CT staffer Ingalls undertook to follow up to ensure an invitation from the Jordanian hosts was resent).

GOK: We Have Challenges, But are Working Around Them

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¶6. (C) Kuwaiti officials noted that current legislation with regard both to CT and CT financing limits the ability of the government to pursue terrorism cases, but largely asserted that adequate work-arounds had been developed. In some cases, existing laws had been clarified or interpreted more rigorously -- the Interior Minister, for example, now has the ability to withhold passport issuance and to revoke a passport once issued if he judged Kuwaiti security to so require. Similarly, KSS can now pursue invasive surveillance (i.e. content, not simply call logs), through a request to the Attorney-General, rather than having to take the matter to court. Where existing law did not adequately criminalize terrorist plotting or facilitation, those involved could be arrested and tried on other charges (e.g., as in one recent case, illegal possession of a firearm and carrying a forged passport). The NSB's Shaykh Thamer asserted that these creative measures were mostly adequate and were in any case necessary as more rigorous new legislation would face a difficult time before Kuwait's parliament.

#### Focus on De-Radicalization

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¶7. (C) Benjamin told his Kuwaiti interlocutors that the U.S. sees solid program and policies that emphasize de-radicalization as critical to longer-term progress against terrorism and that we sought inputs from our allies and friends on how best to develop such approaches. MOSAL Minister Al-Afasi agreed, telling Benjamin and Ambassador Jones that Kuwait has pursued a vigorous public information campaign in this regard, describing a community-wide effort focused on youth and implemented through homes, schools and mosques. In addition to building awareness about the negative impact of extremism, the campaign aims to improve the overall public image of Islam - which Al-Afasi said had been tarnished by false assertions that terrorism was permissible in Islam - a point also emphasized by Amb. Muqames and Shaykh Thamer - "there is nothing Islamic about a suicide bombing," Shaykh Thamer commented flatly.

#### Need to Cast a Broad Net

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¶8. (C) Ambassador Benjamin noted that increasing vigilance against terrorist groups needed to be broadly focused. He

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told his Kuwaiti hosts that while a particular terrorist group today may not target Kuwait or Kuwaiti interests, the history of terrorist organizations demonstrated that they were highly flexible and changed direction - and targets - at will. Consequently the USG urged a wide focus against those engaged in violent, extremist activity and in that context we sought Kuwaiti cooperation in helping ensure that support, particularly financial flows, to the Taliban be cut off. He emphasized that if extremism grew in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, it would radiate outward with wide-reaching destabilizing effects. He also underscored the challenge to stability if a Pakistani-based group such as Lashkar-e-Tayba succeeded in carrying out an attack in India and added that it was imperative to cut off funds for that group. Shaykh Thamer of the NSB assessed that "only a handful, perhaps 10-12" Kuwaitis were actively supporting the Taliban, adding that some parliamentarians rhetorically asserted support for the Taliban, but this was only in an effort to pander to the street by backing groups seen as confronting occupatiQ of Muslim lands. The GOK in noQay supported Qe Taliban nor did it tolerate private support for the group, Shaykh Thamer asserted - "Kuwait has never been and is not interested in getting involved in the Afghan-Pakistan issue, this is something of greater interest further down the Gulf." Shaykh Thamer suggested funding flows to the Taliban should be looked at in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but said this was not an issue in Kuwait.

GOK: We, re Doing A Lot

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¶9. (C) NSB, KSS, MFA and MOSAL officials reported on their collective efforts to improve inter-agency coordination in the area of CT. In addition to financial controls implemented by MFA and MOSAL, and intensified enforcement implemented by NSB and KSS, Central Bank, Ministry of Interior and the Courts work together in cooperation to combat terrorism. As one example, MFA coordinates with the central bank and cut off transfers and/or freeze accounts of anyone suspected of funding terrorism. In response to a question from Ambassador Jones, MOSAL officials described the oversight and accountability process used for Ramadan cash donations: donations are made utilizing the coupon tracking system. Stamped coupon booklets which consist of four duplicate receipts (receipt for donor, receipt for recipient charity, receipt for audit, and receipt for MOSAL) are distributed by MOSAL to charities authorized by GOK to accept donations. MOSAL completes an annual audit of the charity's financials, tracking donations received (tied back to the coupons on record) and expenditures made per project. (REF B). MFA Ambassador Muqames described the role of Kuwait's overseas embassies in monitoring funds that are moved abroad. He stated that Kuwait's embassies engage the host government in the screening and oversight of charitable branches abroad to ensure adherence to charitable giving regulations. MFA is responsible for the oversight of all funds sent abroad and monitors this process. However, when asked by Ambassador Benjamin if any charities had been shut down or otherwise administratively sanctioned for improper activities, GOK officials were not able to cite any specifics. GOK officials expressed frustration on the issue of RIHS, noting that both intelligence information and law enforcement information had been insufficiently forthcoming; they welcomed Ambassador Benjamin's offer to relook at what could be provided.

Comment

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¶10. (C) GOK officials were eager to emphasize to Ambassador Benjamin that they get that terrorism is a threat both for Kuwait and for the U.S. They understandably sought to play up the steps Kuwait has taken in recent months to address CT and CT financing issues, and even when acknowledging weaknesses (i.e., legislation), were keen to emphasize that these were not insurmountable. GOK officials responded positively to an approach that acknowledged Kuwaiti progress, while clearly registering the USG desire for more effort and stronger cooperation/coordination.

¶11. (U) Ambassador Benjamin has cleared this message.

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